

Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century by Charles Garrad, edited by Jean-Luc Pilon and William Fox

Gary Warrick

Volume 107, numéro 1, spring 2015

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1050686ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050686ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Ontario Historical Society

ISSN

0030-2953 (imprimé)

2371-4654 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Warrick, G. (2015). Compte rendu de [*Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century* by Charles Garrad, edited by Jean-Luc Pilon and William Fox]. *Ontario History*, 107(1), 139–142.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1050686ar>

plants in Windsor. The improvement of municipal assets, public health, telephone service, electricity and streetcars, all led to the notion that Windsor was becoming a “distinct urban community.”

Chapter 7 looks at events during 1887-92. Hiram Walker’s investment in the building of the Lake Erie, Essex & Detroit River Railroad, provided an important link between Windsor and the surrounding countryside. The extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway established Windsor as part of a major North American rail system. By the late 1880s, Windsor had become a stronghold for residents wanting the annexation of Canada to the United States, because of perceived regressive tariffs. There was local support for reciprocity. The growth in population resulted in the expansion of town limits and Windsor was incorporated as a city on 24 May 1892.

The final chapter investigates the Victorian era from 1893-1900. In 1891, the rise of anti-Catholic feelings and racial discord is noted. The “Panic of 1893” triggered an economic downturn in Detroit. This had a negative effect on Windsor because of its

dependence on Detroit’s economy. But after 1900, Windsor would rebound to truly become an industrial dynamo.

The lack of any substantive conclusion is a major flaw in Brode’s work. What is a generally well written and informative chronological overview of the history of Windsor to 1900 falls flat at the end. With no summation or encapsulation of arguments made throughout the book, the reader may feel that something is missing. Certainly it is an abrupt end to Brode’s otherwise useful story! I would also question the utility of a selected bibliography, instead of listing all reference sources used. Finally some of the black and white images used to accompany the text are of poor quality. Apart from these shortcomings, I’d recommend *The River & the Land* as a publication to add to your library. It is a welcome addition to the literature about the history of Windsor. Stay tuned for volume 2 (1901-1945), and volume 3 (1946-2009).

John C. Carter

Research Associate, School of Humanities,
University of Tasmania

Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century

by Charles Garrad, edited by Jean-Luc Pilon and William Fox

Gatineau, QC: Canadian Museum of History and University of Ottawa Press, 2014.
623 pages. \$89.95 paperback. ISBN 978-0-77662-144-9 (www.press.uottawa.ca).

The history of Iroquoian speaking peoples in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ontario is normally told by historians and ethno-historians. Archaeologists are viewed by most historians as second-class scholars of history—people who mend broken pots and stone tools of ancient times. Charles Garrad’s *Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Six-*

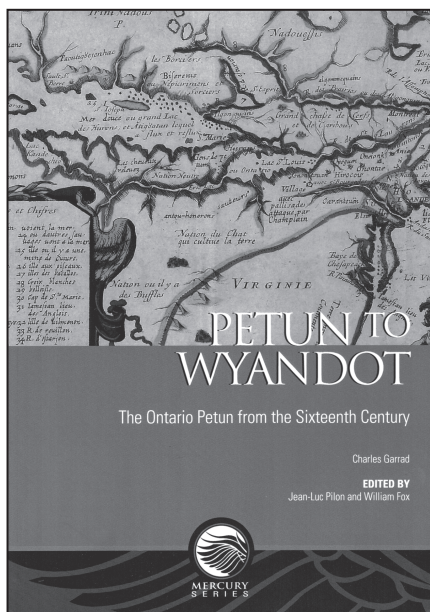
teenth Century is a clear demonstration that archaeologists can make unique contributions to history, by integrating historical (written and oral), archaeological, and anthropological evidence. This book represents the culmination of over fifty years of research and will become an essential encyclopedic reference for any archaeologist or historian who is interested in the early

seventeenth-century history of Ontario.

The goal of Charles Garrad's book is to bring the seventeenth-century Petun out of obscurity onto the centre stage of Ontario history (xxvii). Garrad has achieved this goal without any doubt. He was motivated to write the book in response to a 1985 challenge by Bruce Trigger, the recognized authority on Huron-Wendat archaeology and history.

Petun to Wyandot: The Ontario Petun from the Sixteenth Century is organized into eleven chapters and five appendices. In the Foreword, Charles Garrad summarizes his fifty-year academic interest in Petun archaeology, culture, and history and he declares that the book is the culmination of his life's work. The author is one of those rare non-professional archaeologists whose research and publications are highly respected by the professional archaeological community. His commitment and respect for Petun history have also been honoured by the Wyandot (descendants of Petun); they formally adopted him in 1975 and 1999.

Chapter 1 introduces the Petun, summarizing the history of the Petun, Huron, and Neutral in the seventeenth century. Garrad justifies the use of the name "Petun," which is actually a misnomer from Champlain who called the Iroquoian peoples of the Collingwood region "Nation de Petun," meaning Tobacco People. Garrad explains that Wyandot is probably the best name for the Petun and was likely a self-appellation and became the official name for



this group after their 1650 dispersal from their Ontario homeland. However, like the name "Huron" (also a misnomer and a pejorative term), "Petun" is entrenched in the academic literature, so Garrad decided to use this name to avoid confusion.

Chapter 2 presents and interprets the seventeenth-century cartographic and historical data, noting that errors in locating the Petun were simply copied by map makers

from the original maps. This is a cautionary note to historians to avoid accepting any historical map as accurate. Garrad combines the locations of archaeological village sites, historical trails (reconstructed from nineteenth-century settler roads), and recorded distances between villages, in his detailed reconstruction of the geography of the Petun, reminiscent of Conrad Heidenreich's research on the Huron.

The origins of the Petun are investigated in Chapter 3, using a combination of oral history and archaeology. This chapter offers the most complete compilation of nineteenth-century studies of Petun (Wyandot) oral history in print, but sadly the oral history is too poorly preserved to pinpoint the origin for this people. Archaeology, on the other hand, indicates that the Petun probably represent a ca. A.D. 1580 migration of a few communities of Neutral (Iroquoian speakers who lived in the Hamilton-Brantford region in the early seventeenth century), who journeyed up the Grand River valley to south

of Collingwood to take advantage of rich beaver trapping grounds in the vast wetlands of Luther Marsh and headwaters of the Nottawasaga River. The probable Neutral origin of the Petun has implications for the origins of the southern Bear nation of the Huron-Wendat (*Attignawantan*) because the Petun and southern Bear Huron spoke a similar dialect of Wendat language (as noted in Appendix C of the book).

Chapter 4 provides an excellent presentation of the various seventeenth-century written descriptions of the Petun from Champlain, and the Recollet and Jesuit missionaries. Garrad's summary of the activities of the various Jesuits in the Huron-Petun missions is written as biographical sketches.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Jesuit Mission of the Apostles to the Petuns. In addition to a chronicle of events from 1639-1650 in Petun country, this chapter discusses the motivation behind the Five Nations Iroquois attacks on the Petun and the Huron. Garrad believes that the Iroquois attacks were an attempt to impose by force the Great Law of Peace of the Five Nations Confederacy, and also to acquire women and children captives to bolster the population of the Iroquois after the devastation of the 1634-1640 epidemics of European disease.

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 present and interpret archaeological data amassed from over fifty years of Garrad's research on over 54 sites in Petun country. Chapter 6 features Native artifacts, namely pottery, pipes, chert (stone used in tools, fire starting, etc.), spiritual artifacts, and marine shell, and uses them to impose chronological order on the Petun archaeological sites. Chapter 7 uses European artifacts (glass beads, copper and brass kettle fragments, iron knives and axes) to refine the dating of archaeological sites. Garrad's integra-

tion of inferred site dates from Native and European artifacts is innovative. Chapter 8 addresses Petun subsistence and economy, with a focus on the fur trade. Garrad makes a convincing case for the Petun as trappers of beaver (four times the amount of beaver bones in garbage dumps in Petun as opposed to Neutral and Huron village sites) and their control of the rich beaver trapping grounds in southwestern Ontario. In fact, Garrad argues that the entire reason for the origin of the Petun was to become involved in the fur trade by establishing villages in proximity to the rich beaver marshes of the headwaters of the Grand River.

One of the most important chapters in the book from both an archaeological and historical perspective is Chapter 9. The author reconstructs the chronological sequence of Petun villages, using archaeological and historical data from previous chapters. The importance of this is that archaeological villages can be identified with villages mentioned in the historical record. The research potential is enormous because archaeological data can be compared directly to historical accounts and events situated in certain villages. To date, this cannot be done for any other Aboriginal group in seventeenth-century Ontario.

In Chapter 10, population estimates are provided based on historical and archaeological information. Tragically, the Petun were devastated by disease and war, declining from 10,000 in 1616 to a mere 1,000 at the time of their dispersal in 1650.

Chapter 11 links the modern Wyandot communities of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Anderdon (Detroit) historically to the Petun of 1650, tracing the history of each Wyandot community. This final chapter is a gem, especially for the nineteenth-century history of the Wyandot. The five appendices deal with pottery types, faunal remains,

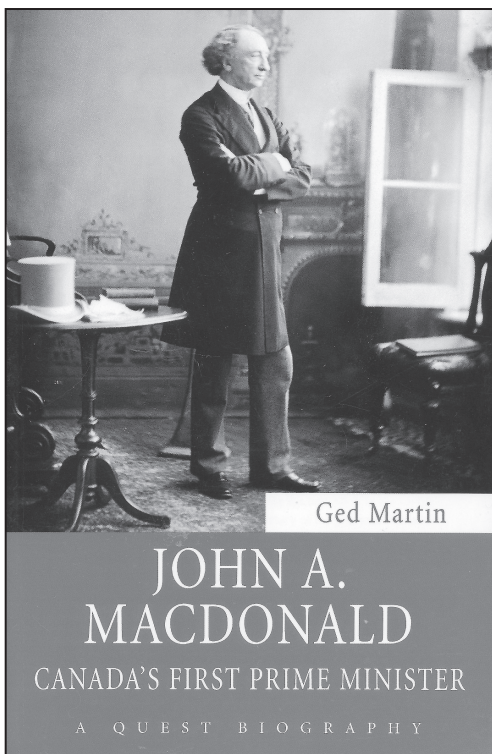
linguistic data, wampum belts, and names for the Petun. Of the five, appendix C, on linguistic data, should have been incorporated into Chapter 3 on Petun origins.

The overall organization of the book works well. Editors Jean-Luc Pilon and William Fox, and Rudy Fecteau (who provided crystal-clear artifact photographs) and Andrew Stewart (who drafted the excellent maps), in close collaboration with the author, created a readable book out of a huge body of historical and archaeological data. It is rare to see the results of fifty years of research being distilled into one volume.

In summary, Charles Garrad's *Petun to Wyandot* is a wonderful example of integrating historical and archaeological data to produce a work of Aboriginal history. In

fact, the Ontario Archaeological Society has recognized this book by awarding it the 2014 Award for Excellence in Publishing. It deserves to be read as part of a trilogy, which includes Kathryn Labelle's *Dispersed but Not Destroyed* and John Steckley's *The Eighteenth-Century Wyandot*. This book will occupy a prominent place on the bookshelf of any serious scholar of Aboriginal history and have an appeal for the general reader as well. Charles Garrad should be applauded for writing the definitive history of the seventeenth-century Petun. I am certain that the Petun-Wyandot ancestors and living descendants are pleased.

Gary Warrick,
Wilfrid Laurier University



John A. Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister

by Ged Martin

Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2013. 215 pp., index. \$19.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-1-45970-651-4. \$9.99 e-book. ISBN: 978-145970-653-8 (www.dundurn.com)

Ged Martin has long been a reliable and insightful guide to John A. Macdonald, offering over the years original essays on confederation debates, Macdonald and alcoholism, Macdonald's accent, Macdonald and his Kingston, and the limits of archival research in understanding Canada's first prime minister. With this short book conceived for the "Quest Biography" series that already includes forty portraits of people as varied as Tecumseh and Jacques Plante, Martin's mandate is to initiate the curious more than to impress the learned. Freed of foot-